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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: HOME DEMOLITIONS STRIKE ANGRY CHORD IN EAST
JERUSALEM NEIGHBORHOOD

REF: JERUSALEM 368

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Jerusalem Municipality demolished four homes in East Jerusalem on August 13, two in the Ashkariya neighborhood of Beit Hanina (north Jerusalem). Local residents told PolOff that Ashkariya is zoned as "green land" even though it is privately owned, and said the Municipality has rejected efforts to rezone the land. One resident said Israeli police led him to believe that the USG funded these home demolitions. He linked recent violence in Jerusalem to the policy of home demolitions. End Summary.

MUNICIPALITY DEMOLISHES FOUR HOMES IN EAST JERUSALEM

¶2. (C) Meir Margalit, Coordinator for the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAH), told PolOff that the Jerusalem Municipality demolished four homes in East Jerusalem August 13. Margalit said the homes were demolished because they lacked the necessary construction permits. Two homes belonged to the Ajluni and Abu Sabah families and were located in the Ashkariya neighborhood, in Beit Hanina (north Jerusalem). One of the demolished homes was an unfinished building in Issawiya; another was in Jabal Mukabbar.

¶3. (C) PolOff visited the two sites in Ashkariya and spoke with members of the Ajluni and Abu Sabah families shortly after the demolitions. Husnia Ajluni said Israeli police unexpectedly woke her and her family early in the morning and removed them and their belongings from the two-room home. The family then watched the demolition. She pointed to the neighboring hilltop settlements of Ramot Allon and Ramot Shlomo, which she said were built on privately owned Palestinian land, asking why Israelis can build while Palestinians cannot.

RESIDENTS TRYING TO GET CONSTRUCTION
APPROVED, BELIEVE USG SUPPORTS DEMOLITIONS

¶4. (C) Bader Shuwayka, a neighbor of the Ajluni family, told PolOff that the area of Ashkariya is zoned as "green" (meaning the land can be left undeveloped or used for parks, but not for construction) despite being privately owned Palestinian land. He said Palestinians have built 80-100 illegal homes in the area, all of which have demolition orders against them. He said the Municipality's bureaucratic process randomly selects homes in the area to demolish, and that his daughter's family had to demolish their home in early July to avoid paying fines. He pointed out several recently demolished homes in the area.

¶5. (C) Ramadan Bader, a neighbor of the Abu Sabah family, told PolOff that he heads a committee of local residents that has tried for seven years to rezone the land as residential.

The Municipality has rejected the committee's recommendations, he said. (Note: Rami Nasrallah, Director of the International Peace Cooperation Center (IPCC), told PolOff on August 14 that land ownership in Ashkariya is disputed between Palestinians, which has slowed down the process of rezoning. End Note).

¶6. (C) Bader said Israeli police told him that USG funds were used to demolish the homes. Most Ashkariya residents believe this, he added. He said the recent bulldozer attacks in Jerusalem stem from Palestinians' frustration at not being able to conduct life normally in East Jerusalem.

WALLES